

NSC BRIEFING

13 May 1954

INDOCHINA MILITARY

I. It generally accepted fact that war in Indochina will be won or lost in Tonkin delta.

A. Militarily, its control means hold on most densely populated (7,000,000) area.

1. It contains second best seaport in Indochina and four of the six major airfields.

B. Economically, Viet Minh capture would give it light industrial facilities which far beyond what it now has.

1. Also, delta normally produces about 2,000,000 tons rice annually.

C. Psychologically, it is traditional center of nationalism in Vietnam and its loss would deal heavy blow to anti-Communist morale in rest of Vietnam.

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III.

vanguard

of enemy's returning battle force will reach Tonkin delta by 26 May, ready for combat.

A. This force would amount to nine battalions, to be followed by ~~rest of about 28~~ ^{REMAINDER, 19 MORE} battalions.

OGA DIA reviews completed

State Department review completed

- 2 -

25X1

IV.

entire

Dien Bien Phu force can return to delta, combat-ready, by 2 June. Thus, according to French figures, over ^{REGULAR} 40_A battalions could be brought to bear on the delta, both from the outside and within. In addition to these regular troops, there would be reserves of regional forces, now reportedly ordered north of delta for training.

A.

B.

control of delta airfields is key to this struggle; if airfields are lost, Hanoi, like other strongholds, will become another Dien Bien Phu.

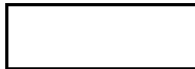
C. Although enemy movement from Dien Bien Phu not yet discerned, air observation shows that Viet Minh has abandoned its AA emplacements.

V. Viet Minh now has 37mm AA guns protecting its supply route from Caobang southward toward the delta, according to French.

A. This underlines a report last week that the enemy is improving his supply network from the China border to delta.

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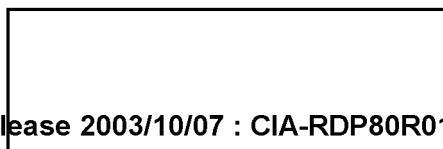
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VII. In Cambodia, invasion in early April by two regular Viet Minh battalions upset delicate balance between Cambodian army and enemy guerrillas.

A. Shift of Cambodian units, to meet threat in northeast, exposed south and central portions of country to increased enemy harassment.

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- 4 -

B. General O'Daniel, after 10-11 May visit to Phnom
 Penh, commented on ⁱ⁾ strong defensive-mindedness

of Cambodians (~~engineered by French~~) ^{RESULT OF} and failure ^{ADVICE}
 of Cambodians ^{REACT TO} to ~~view~~ Viet Minh threat in ⁱⁱ⁾ true
 light of nation ~~invaded~~ ^{AS WOULD BE}

EXPECTED OF

AN INVADDED

C. O'Daniel believes Cambodians must form three light
 divisions by November, otherwise country will be
 under heavy Viet Minh invasion.

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VIII. Laniel, in an apparent reversal of French strategy, this
 week told Dillon in Paris that the French might be forced
 to withdraw completely from Laos and Cambodia in order
 to protect key areas of Vietnam.

A. Such a withdrawal from Laos would deliver that
 country to the Viet Minh in short order.

B. Cambodia could be expected to oppose the Viet Minh
~~agorously~~ in the hope of US technical aid. But
 any Viet Minh intervention in division strength
 would bring about its quick collapse.

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